



## Constructions and context: when a construction constructs context

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### ► To cite this version:

Jose Deulofeu, Jeanne-Marie Debaisieux. Constructions and context: when a construction constructs context. Alexander Bergs and Gabriele Diewald. Contexts and Constructions, John Benjamins Publishing Company., pp.22- 44, 2009, Constructional Approaches to Language 9. hal-00430650

**HAL Id: hal-00430650**

**<https://hal.science/hal-00430650>**

Submitted on 9 Nov 2009

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The role of context in construction grammar has been up to now viewed from a restricted point of view. That is, context is used to help in analysing the meaning and the pragmatic aspects of constructions, in keeping with the following assumption:

1. Context (common ground) forms part of the construction's semantics

Namely, it has been observed that, in many cases, constructions have a non-compositional meaning. A sub class of semantic non compositional construction is characterized by the fact that its interpretation involves the incorporation of pieces of information derived by taking into account the context, broadly speaking, of the utterance effected through the construction. The introduction of these contextual pieces of information is achieved in most cases by means of lexemes carrying an instructional meaning: "look at this aspect of context to process the meaning of the construction". This situation is best described by this excerpt from Paul Kay:

"A number of grammatical constructions have been described in which Part or all of the meaning of the construction is [...] a virtual instruction to the addressee to examine the common ground of the conversation (along with the other interpretive content of the sentence) to fill in some partially specified part of the intended interpretation. An example involving the construction employing the expression *let alone* is given in (a).

(a) Fred won't order shrimp, let alone Louise, squid.

The addressee of an utterance of (a) can only interpret it successfully if he can find in, or construct from, the conversational common ground a set of assumptions according to which Louise's willingness to order squid unilaterally entails Fred's willingness to order shrimp." (Kay, 1997 : 3)

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<sup>1</sup> We are very grateful to the anonymous reviewer whose comments helped us to improve a first version of this paper.

In addition, (a) shows how such complex interpretational phenomena can be conventionally associated with a particular morphosyntax, that is, they are encoded in the construction via the expression *let alone*, as an instruction marker.

The aim of our paper is to address another case of a syntactic pattern involving context, which can be summed up by assumption 2 :

2. a construction provides pieces of context that the speaker considers to be necessary for the addressee to get a relevant interpretation of the current utterance.

We claim that alongside constructions, like the *let alone* one, which need context to be interpreted, there exist constructions which bring in background contextual information to maximize the "relevance" of the utterance they are added to. This assertion seems at first glance quite paradoxical. How can a piece of an utterance be considered as context, isn't it just text? We would like to show that some pieces of utterances are not in fact part of the ongoing text, but have some kind of background status which makes them part of the context. At first glance, these pieces of utterances have, in the domain of speech, the same status as footnotes have in written uses of language. They are, strictly speaking, marginal to the text and nearer to context status than to plain text status. In any case these subconstructs inserted in utterances have a special status that must be accounted for in linguistic theory and in construction grammar. Their special status can be revealed in that they show idiosyncratic formal as well as pragmatic properties.

To show this, we will focus on a subgroup of these constructions, namely those which are introduced by grammatical devices (so called subordinators) and which appear as superficially synonymous with prototypical subordinate clauses. Consider this example of a *parce que* clause in spoken French translated with bold '**cos**' (Debaisieux, 2002) :

- (1) le **roi** *parce que le roi est très aimé en Thaïlande je crois que j'en ai parlé avant le **roi** est arrivé[...]*... à leur faire comprendre que cette culture était très en dent de scie (LOU. Cas.)

‘The king ‘cos the king is very much loved in Thailand - I think I have said that before - the king succeeded in making them understand that this culture was very uneven.’

The French version is perfect. The *parce que* clause reintroduces a piece of relevant common ground (as underlined by the metacommunicative speaker’s comment *I think I have said that before*) by interrupting the processing of the main line of discourse. We will show that this use of *parce que* is specific. It has neither the properties of subordinating *parce que*, nor even exactly those of the *parce que / cos*’ introducing “supplementive” clauses according to the terminology of Huddleston & Pullum (2002) and evidenced in the well known examples :

- (2) Jean est certainement à la Fac parce que j’ai vu qu’il avait laissé sa voiture dans le parking  
‘Sure John is at the University ‘cos I noticed that he left his car in the parking lot ’

*Parce que* in (1) shares the non-subordinate status with *parce que* in (2), but it differs in many respects, as we will show later on. For instance it allows strict lexical repetition (see bolded words in 1), which are on the contrary very awkward in (3):

- (3) **Jean** est certainement à la Fac parce que j’ai vu qu’ il ( ??**Jean**) avait laissé sa voiture dans le parking  
‘Sure John is at the University ‘cos I noticed that he (?? John) left his car in the parking lot’

Our claim is that the *parce que* construct in (1) belongs to a special type of syntactic construction, which we will call : Context Focussing *Parce que* Construction (CFPC). The main goal of our paper is to provide a description of these uses of *parce que*, introducing CFPC based on syntactic contexts as well as pragmatic functions. Besides this descriptive goal, we would like to address some theoretical issues. What is the exact status of this construction? In which kind of inheritance network is it involved ?

The paper is organized in the following way : in section 1, we investigate the properties of CFPC, concluding that it is a specific syntactic pattern, in which the *parce que* clause is not licensed by any grammatical

category or construction<sup>2</sup>. In section 2, we distinguish two pragmatic subtypes of this pattern. In section 3, we show that this pattern is specific to spoken language in that it cannot be syntactically reduced to the insertion of a footnote, as found in written styles. We conclude in section 4 by addressing the theoretical issue. This study is based on examples extracted from an authentic corpus of spoken French. The corpus consists of a 250, 000 word transcription of recordings of spontaneous language in various natural environments (interviews, dialogs, narratives, etc.). More than 200 examples of CFPC constructs have been extracted.

## 1. CFPC as a specific syntactic pattern.

### 1.1 CFPC is an instance of non subordinate Conjunction + Clause

Let us consider as a prototypical example of CFPC the *parce que* clause in example (1) repeated below as (4):

- (4) **le roi** *parce que le roi est très aimé en Thaïlande je crois que j'en ai parlé avant* le roi est arrivé[...]... à leur faire comprendre que cette culture était très en dent de scie (Thaïlande)

As said above, in this use, the *parce que* clause conveys the meaning of backgrounded information, out of the main line of the discourse, by means of which the speaker builds a relevant “common ground” for the addressee. We can first show that CFPC as an instance of non subordinate *parce que* Clause. The non subordinative use of clauses introduced by conjunctions has been observed in situations where the Conj Clause follows the main clause :

- (5) c'est une prof de SVT *parce que l'an dernier j'ai fait un stage avec elle*  
'She is a teacher of Natural science (I can assert that) 'cos last year I had a training session with her.'

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<sup>2</sup> On the contrary the internal shape of the *parce que* clause is more grammatically constrained. Even if we can find more complex patterns than in adjunct *parce que* clauses, they are all based on a tensed clause. In (13) and (14) for instance the CFPC is composed of a juxtaposition of IPs, instead of the coordination of CPs found in subordinate *parce que* clauses. We will not address here the analysis of the internal structure of the *parce que* clause ( Debaisieux, 2002)

In this pattern , the *parce que* clause does not express a cause of the fact asserted in the main clause, but an argument in favor of the assertion made by the main clause. One can verify that this construct has no properties characteristic of the subordinate use, and thus cannot be analyzed as a syntactic adjunct in the main clause (Debaisieux 2002).

a. This clause cannot be clefted:

- (6) \*c'est *parce que* l'an dernier j'ai fait un stage avec elle **que**  
c'est une prof de SVT

b. It cannot be an answer to a *why* question :

- (7) Pourquoi c'est une prof de SVT ? \* *parce que* l'an dernier j'ai  
fait un stage avec elle

c. It cannot be modified by a scope adverbial :

- (8) \*c'est une prof de SVT **surtout** *parce que* l'an dernier j'ai fait  
un stage avec elle

d. It cannot be anteposed to the main clause :

- (9) \**parce que* l'an dernier j'ai fait un stage avec elle c'est une  
prof de SVT

e. It cannot be conjoined with the main clause with anaphoric *cela* 'that' :

- (10) \*c'est un prof de SVT et *cela* *parce que* j'ai fait un stage avec  
elle

It is easy to check that the inserted *parce que* clause in (4) has the same behavior and thus cannot be analyzed as an adjunct subordinate clause. But other properties show that the pattern is a special case of "in subordinate" *parce que* clause.

## 1. 2. Specific properties of CFPC

### 1.2.1 Formal properties

a. Free insertion within « main clause ».

The non subordinate *parce que* clause generally follows the main clause. It is unusual to find it inserted in the main clause :

- (11) ??c'est une prof parce que l'an dernier j'ai fait un stage avec elle une prof de SVT

On the contrary the backgrounded CFPC can be freely inserted in the main clause (12), where the insertion occurs after a fragmented word :

- (12) il a dit maintenant tu vas mettre **la mitr-** *parce que tu sais c'est pas tout le monde qui sait mettre une mitrailleuse en marche\_euh* tu vas mettre la mitrailleuse là-bas (BIR. 7, 5)  
 'He says now you are to set the mach- (ine gun) 'cos you know not everybody knows how to set up a machine gun hum you are to set the machine gun over there.'

We know that “random” insertions of adverbial adjuncts functioning as epistemic parentheticals or metalinguistic comments are also possible, but interestingly enough these insertions are not entirely free but grammatically constrained (Espinal, 1991, Marandin, 1999) : they occur roughly at the boundary of any major constituent. No such constraints govern our CFPC insertions. They occur as soon as the speaker considers that they are pragmatically required for the processing of the message.

#### b. Prosodic pattern.

Martin (1978 ) and Morel & Danon-Boileau (1998) describe in detail the specific prosodic contour which is observed in parenthetical constructs inserted in a “main” construction, whether they are bare or introduced by a grammatical device. We should point out first that the *parce que* Clause in (5) shows the regular assertive contour of main clauses with Low F0 on the last accented syllable. On the contrary, CFPC has a specific F0 high, spread over the structure (level 2 on a scale of 4), and shows a flattened shape and fastened speech flow at the onset. All these features iconically contribute a backgrounding effect. The CFPC in our examples follows this general pattern. In cases where CFPC is postponed to and not inserted in the main clause (see example 16), it shows the same prosodic pattern, and the effect will be one of afterthought.

#### c. Specific syntactic form.

The iconic backgrounding effect of the prosodic pattern is reinforced in many cases by other segmental iconic devices. We observe - in bold in examples

(13) and (14) - lexical reiterations with extra syntactic position in the main clause. Within CFPC these elements are not perceived as disfluencies<sup>3</sup> : they help establish a kind of natural bracketing of the parenthetical insertion. If we drop the inserted CFPC, like in (13') or (14') the repeated bold lexical items would appear as mere performance phenomena without any structural function. As a consequence, the syntactic form of the whole pattern is not exactly the sum of two well formed sentences, one being inserted in the other.

- (13) au moment où il arrive donc / ce qui est marrant bon **le directeur** / *parce que c'est le directeur qui fait passer tout ça c'est lui qui supervise tout* / **le directeur** il lui dit / vous êtes prêt (ALI. Cas.)

'At the time he arrives thus what is funny (is that) well the director – 'cos it is the director who checks all this it is him who supervises everything – the director says to him : are you ready ?

- (13') ? bon **le directeur le directeur** il lui dit / vous êtes prêt

- (14) bien entendu dans son système il fallait que les masses jouissent d'avantages qu'elles n'avaient pas eus auparavant/ **donc le problème** du logement / *parce que l'Empereur Napoléon III est un empereur de la vie quotidienne /un homme qui s'intéresse de très près aux réalités de la vie de tous les jours/* **ce problème donc** il fallait qu'il le prenne à bras le corps (GUE. Cas.)

'Needless to say in his system the population had to benefit of privileges which they didn't have before so the issue of accommodation –'cos the Emperor Napoleon the IIIrd is an Emperor of everyday life a man who is deeply concerned with true everyday life (problems) – this problem thus he wanted to fix it

- (14') ? bien entendu dans son système il fallait que les masses jouissent d'avantages qu'elles n'avaient pas eus auparavant/ **donc le problème** du logement **ce problème donc** il fallait qu'il le prenne à bras le corps

#### d. Lack of isotopy constraints.

The utterances forming the main line of a discourse are integrated in larger discourse units like narrative or argumentative patterns. Such discursive

<sup>3</sup> The same kind of pattern has been found in other languages. For example in spoken German (Stoltenburg , 2003) or Finnish (Duvallon, 2006)



pragmatic organizations can be considered as particular instances of a more general pragmatic pattern : communicative action + possible continuation. The continuation link has some formal counterparts in what can be called default discourse agreement rules. Two well known instances of these rules are tense concord and default pronominalisation in the case of coreference. The CFPC does not conform to these tendencies : cases of free tense sequence (present tense *sait* inserted in a main line pattern with past tense in [15]) or absence of default pronominalisation (repetition of *le directeur* in (13) or of *problème* in [14]) can be observed :

- (15) donc en Allemagne **j'ai rencontré** des gens qui travaillaient pour les paléontologues/ qui étaient des amateurs mais qui **savaient** très bien travailler/ **parce que** le paléontologue il **sait** très bien étudier une pièce mais il ne **sait** pas l'extraire et la restaurer et la remettre sur gange si elle a été abîmée tout ça / **c'est comme ça** que **j'ai connu** le gisement de X (PAUL. Cas.)  
 'Thus in Germany I met some people who were working for paleontologists who where amateurs but who knew very well how to do the things *because the paleontologist he knows very well how to study a sample but he doesn't know how to extract it and to restore it if it has been damaged all that it is like this that I got acquainted with the excavations of X.*'

This situation is best understood if we assume that the *parce que* Clause is not part of the current discourse sequence and functions at another level that can be named the regulative level. Utterances at this level have the function of regulating the main organization of the ongoing discourse and not of pushing it up. Consequently we can assume that the grounds for establishing reference are different at the two levels. In (15), there is no possible coreference between the two occurrences of the NP based on the lexical head *paléontologue*. The first occurrence refers to paleontologists involved in the excavations which took place in Germany mentioned in the narrative main line of discourse, whereas the second occurrence refers to the general class of paleontologists and is used to provide encyclopedic information at the regulative level.

e. Autonomous illocutionary force and specific groundedness of information.

This difference of levels can be noticed in the enunciative domain as well as in the discursive one. The main clause and the *parce que* clause belong to two distinct enunciative grounds as exemplified in (16) below. The enunciator of the main clause (*elle disait...*) is a character of the narrative (the grandmother), whereas the enunciative ground of the inserted *parce que* clause is the speaker itself : The CFPC provides a piece of cultural context ignored by the addressee and necessary for the correct interpretation of the default invited inference of the question : the granddaughter is not a good pupil - as one could infer from “pass the examination at twelve” - but a bad one (twelve was indeed the default age for the Certificate in those times).

- (16) alors ma grand mère elle allait voir l'institutrice et elle disait /est-ce que vous pensez que elle pourra passer le certificat d'études à 12 ans/  
*parce que c'était pas à 14 ans c'était à 12 ans* et tous les soirs elle regardait tu as bien fait tes devoirs tout (MICH. Cas.)  
 ‘Then my grandma she went and see the school teacher and she said : do you think she will be able to pass the Certificate at 12 ‘cos it was not at 14 (as now) but at 12 and every evening she was checking : have you done your home work everything ?’

f. No grammatical relation nor category involved.

All these formal properties could be summed up in saying that the CFPC is a clause which is inserted in an utterance as an utterance on its own, with its specific illocutionary force and communicative grounding, without any grammatical link or constraint regarding the main utterance. There is apparently a dependency relation between the main and the inserted utterance, in the sense that the CFPC needs a main structure to appear. But what is the exact nature of this dependency ?

Consider for instance example (16). How is the CFPC licensed? If we take as the main clause the first part of the utterance, all the syntactic tests used to demonstrate syntactic dependency will fail. The only argument for making *elle disait* the main clause is that, if we drop it, the sequence becomes unacceptable :

- (17) ?? alors ma grand mère elle allait voir l'institutrice *parce que c'était pas à 14 ans c'était à 12 ans* et tous les soirs elle regardait tu as bien fait tes devoirs tout

Does this test prove that the CFPC is syntactically licensed by the verb or the CP *elle disait...*? In fact, there is an alternative way to describe the situation. We could say that the CFPC is pragmatically or discursively licensed by the previous discourse. CFPC is not dependent on the main clause as a grammatical structure but as a meaningful piece of discourse.

One could argue against this idea of “discourse dependency” by saying that in all the examples above there are arguments in favour of grouping the *parce que* clause with a specific utterance. For example, in (16), as the *et* prohibits the grouping of the *parce que* clause with the following one, it seems that the only possible grouping is with *elle disait est-ce que vous pensez qu'elle va pouvoir passer le certificat à 12 ans ?* Consequently, in such cases, the licensing pragmatic category would not be a discourse pattern but a specific illocutionary act in this pattern. We assume, nevertheless, that “discourse” licensing is the right analysis. There are indeed examples in which there is no mark of grouping with the preceding or the following clause :

- (18) S1 oui parce qu'il suffit qu'un bouton soit défectueux et puis ça marche pas  
 S2 oui **tu peux avoir une panne d'électrique** *parce que tout est commandé électriquement maintenant ou avec des motorisations des télécommandes un tas de trucs* **il peut y avoir des systèmes** qui fonctionnent pas  
 ‘Yes you can have an electricity failure – ‘cos it is all electrically controlled now or with additional engines or remote control a lot of devices - it can happen that some systems do not operate

In such cases the CFPC should be analysed as ‘floating above’ the whole discourse and not attached to a specific utterance. Even pragmatically, the grouping appears impossible : the content of the *parce que* clause provides a relevant background for the first utterance as well as for the second one.

What CFPC needs in order to be licensed is the production of a piece of discourse, whatever its grammatical form, or even a mere communicative action on the part of one participant in the interaction, for which it will provide, in a backgrounded position, required contextual information. This communicative action can be an illocutionary act conveyed by any kind of linguistic form or even a significant communicative behavior accomplished

by the participant. What licenses CFPC is the discourse as a whole and not a grammatical category.

A good example for what we have called pragmatic or discursive dependency can be given by an occurrence of CFPC without any possible grammatical basis of insertion. The situation is an interaction between three speakers. L1 is the owner of a farm who speaks only French. L2 and L3 are farm workers native speakers of Portuguese. L2 is almost bilingual, L3 almost monolingual. L1 explains the tasks to be done in French to L2 and L3. L2, without having said anything in French to L1 to confirm that he has understood his message, speaks in Portuguese to L3, translating the message of L1, then he turns to L1 and utters :

- (19) *parce qu'en français il comprend encore pas tout*  
‘cos in French he still does not understand everything

The *parce que* Clause inserted in the interaction cannot be related to any grammatical structure : it is inserted in the interaction and “depends”, as an explanatory background, on the communicative behavior of translation.

This description allows for a coherent analysis of the formal properties of CFPC : the lack of grammatical dependency explains the failure of syntactic dependency tests, the pragmatic dependency implied by the foreground background relationship explains the need for a previous piece of information for CFPC to be licensed.

### *1.2.2 pragmatic function*

CFPC as a specific form of “discourse” dependent clause is associated with an instructional pragmatic function that can be informally phrased as this :

« Take into account preferably the piece of contextual information conveyed by CFPC in computing the meaning of the main illocutionary act (or communicative behavior) and in making the relevant discourse inferences ».

“Preferably” means that this piece of information is focused on within all the possible contextual informations available to the addressee. In many cases, it appears that CFPC provides a verbalization of missing contextual

information, which is often underlined by metacommunicative comments by the speaker (in bold)<sup>4</sup> :

- (20) elle était venue donc au clavier parce qu'elle voulait chanter / ***parce que c'est une fana du chant j'ai oublié de vous le dire*** / seulement le problème c'est que c'est une fille qui a une voix un peu d'opéra (ALI. Cas.)  
'She turned to the piano because she wanted to sing **'cos she is a fan of singing I forgot to tell you...**' but the problem is that she has a voice for opera.'

It is worth pointing out that the conventionalized semantic value of *parce que* as a lexical unit can be maintained in this use. We are not to consider that *parce que* has been reanalyzed as a kind of discourse particle. The role of *parce que* as a link between main and backgrounded utterances parallels its grammatical role relating two facts conveyed respectively by a main and a subordinate clause as in the first occurrence of the *parce que* clause in (20). The basic conventionalized meaning of the preposition *par* : *à travers* 'through' can be used to describe it in both cases. Informally we can phrase it as :

"The speech (or communicative) action associated with the main utterance is fully understandable **through (à travers)** the speech act introduced by *parce que*."

The causal value of subordinating *parce que* in [P (main clause) *parce que* Q Clause] can in turn be obtained through the basic meaning, bearing in mind that the effect of the subordinating relation is to restrict the semantic scope of the *parce que* Clause to the interpretation as a fact of the content of the main clause : P is a fact through fact Q (= fact Q is the cause of fact P).

The "à travers" value is conventionally associated to *parce que*, as shown by the fact that the CFPC introduced by other conjunctions has a different behavior. For instance *bien que* introduces a clause expressing a correction to a preceding assertion as a backgrounded afterthought :

- (21) j'étais pas trop j'ai jamais été trop système scolaire + euh bien que je j'aime bien quand il y a des règles quand même hein – (BOR-R00PRI003)

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<sup>4</sup> Notice that in this piece of discourse a parenthetical *parce que* clause is combined with a preceding subordinate adjunct *parce que* Clause (*parce qu'elle voulait chanter*)

‘I was not I never was too (favorable to) strict school regulations –well although I like it when there are rules anyway.’

This mitigating function can be linked to the conventionalized meaning of the conjunction *bien que* ‘in spite of’ applied to the relationship between the two illocutionary forces of the utterances, that is informally : *je suis pas scolaire du tout* is a true assertion “in spite” of the truth of *j’aime bien quand il y a des règles*. As we may expect, the formal properties confirm this pragmatic function. A parenthetical insertion of this *bien que* clause sounds very strange :

- (22) ? j’étais **pas trop** euh **bien que** je j’aime bien quand il y a des règles quand même hein - j’ai jamais été trop système scolaire + je suis pas scolaire du tout +

On the contrary, a CFPC introduced by *parce que* would be perfectly possible in this position :

- (23) j’étais pas trop euh **parce que** je j’aime **pas** quand il y a trop de règles hein - j’ai jamais été trop système scolaire +

There could be a pragmatic explanation for this distribution. In order to provide a correction with *bien que* the speaker needs the corrected assertion to be completed. On the other hand contextual background information can be introduced by *parce que* as soon as the ongoing communicative act has begun to be processed. The conclusion is that, if the syntax of the pattern is kind of iconic, the morphological marking is achieved through lexemes with conventionalized meanings.

## 2. Pragmatic subtypes of CFPC

We can distinguish two main subtypes of CFPC, according to their pragmatic function.

### a. Regulation of the interaction by **framing**

The CFPC focuses or makes explicit some pieces of background information, thanks to which the addressee will be able to make the required inferences to reach a coherent interpretation of the whole message. In interactions about commonplace topics, the inserted piece is simply missing from the common ground. Consider for instance (20) above, where the speaker explicitly points

it out ('I have forgotten to tell you that'). In more technical discussions involving experts and non-experts, the experts use CFPC to bring encyclopedic knowledge in the common ground. For instance, in example (24), the expert must first emphasize the status of patient for a person who has no sensation of pain, which is against the audience commonsense expectations. Then The use of *pauvres* 'unfortunate' to qualify them is also justified by the medical pessimistic prognosis conveyed by the second CFPC.

- (24) il y a bon de très rares cas mais ça existe quand même de malades *parce que ce sont vraiment des malades* qui n'ont dès la naissance aucune sensation de douleur et ces pauvres enfin ces pauvres enfants souvent *parce qu'ils ne vivent pas très longtemps dans la plupart des cas* sont complètement déformés (PRIE.7, 5)

'Well there are very rare cases – but it happens anyway – of ill people – 'cos they are actually ill people – who from their birth on have no sensation of pain and these unfortunate –well these unfortunate children –'cos they do not live very long in most of the cases – are totally crippled.'

#### b. Regulation by **reframing**

In those cases, a coherent and apparently relevant interpretation can be reached by the addressee within the frame of what he thinks is the current common ground. But it is not the interpretation intended by the speaker, whose ground is different. So, in order to guide the addressee to this interpretation, the speaker, aware of the gap between the “grounds”, must block the undesirable inferences which could lead to the wrong interpretation. The reframing is achieved by means of the CFPC, which reestablishes a suitable common ground. This situation is found in (16) above : the wrong default ground is that the examination is taken at 14, the reframed ground is that the examination is taken at 12. In (25) the default ground is that you do not buy a driving license but that you have to take (and pass) a test to get your driving license. If the speaker wants to block the unintended inference that the father acted against the law, he must reframe its narrative by adding in the CFPC : “ there (in that country) you do not pass the license you buy it” to get the proper ground.

- (25) je pense que mon père a su me donner une certaine conscience  
ce qui fait que dès que je suis retourné j'ai eu mon permis

/enfin mon père m'a acheté le permis / *parce que là-bas tu passes pas le permis tu l'achètes* / donc mon père m'a acheté mon permis de voiture il m'a prêté une voiture (JAL. Cas.)

'I think that my father succeeded in giving me moral concerns. It is the reason why as soon as I went back home I got my driving licence well my father bought me the licence –'cos there you do not need to take a driving test you just buy the licence so my father bought the license for me he lent me a car.'

### 3 CFPC does not have the structure of an inserted footnote

We said in the introduction that patterns like CFPC plays the same role in spontaneous speech as footnotes in written text. This is roughly true but there are some important differences between the two devices that are to be pointed out. Footnotes, and even notes inserted in brackets or balloons in electronic texts, are autonomous semantic and syntactic units inserted in the main text. The main text remains a sequence of well formed sentences if the notes are removed. From a semantic point of view, the notes helps to understand the main text, but even without the notes, it is a coherent discourse. The parenthetical oral structures we are studying conform in many cases to this pattern but they may also interact more closely with either the syntax or the semantics of the main discourse, as already mentioned in section 1. We will address in this section further cases where the CFPC contributes either to the syntactic cohesion or to the coherence of the utterance it is inserted in.

(26) below is perfectly acceptable as a discourse pattern. But if we remove the inserted CFPC, as in (26') it appears that the result is agrammatical, due to the presence of **et alors**. Whereas the whole discourse pattern is widely attested in spontaneous speech, the reduced one sounds very strange and unusual.

- (26) les Espagnols alors quand on voulait les faire enrager parce qu'**alors** les Espagnols eux ils étaient flegmatiques ils restaient des journées entières allongés dans des salles de classes à rien faire et **alors** pour les faire enrager on leur disait Arriba España Viva Franco (RAIM. Cas.)

The Spanish then when we wanted to upset them –'cos you know the Spanish were very phlegmatic they stayed the whole day long lying in classrooms, without doing anything - and



then to upset them we said to them : Arriba Espana, Viva Franco.'

- (26') ? les Espagnols alors quand on voulait les faire enrager **et**  
**alors** pour les faire enrager on leur disait Arriba España  
Viva Franco

One way to describe this situation is to say that the **alors** and the **et** in (26) are not licensed by any category in the construction underlying the main utterance but by the discourse CFPC pattern as a whole (the repeated **alors** function as iconic brackets and the **et** (**alors**) marks the transition between the background and the main line of the discourse). It is then expected that, in the absence of one essential part of the pattern, those marks should be absent. We arrive at the conclusion that the syntax of a discourse pattern may interact with the syntactic patterns or the constructions included in it to create new kinds of syntactic forms. These blended structures are certainly ungrammatical as clause constructions but perfectly acceptable and functional as discourse patterns. Another example of this phenomenon is provided by (27) :

- (27) en Algérie par exemple les panneaux publicitaires /rares panneaux  
*parce que c'est un pays où la publicité n'est pas aussi dominante*  
*qu'au\_Maroc* **mais** les rares panneaux publicitaires sont écrits en arabe  
(PHU. 8, 5)  
'In Algeria for example the very few advertisement posts very few  
'cos it is a country where advertising is not so developed as in  
Morocco but the very few ad posts are written in Arab.'  
(27') ? en Algérie par exemple les panneaux publicitaires rares panneaux  
**mais** les rares panneaux publicitaires sont écrits en arabe (PHU. 8,  
5)

The reduced version is here also agrammatical. But its syntax can be explained at the discourse pattern level in the full version. The lexical repetition of *panneaux* marks the bracketing of the CFPC and the **mais** is licensed as a mark of a "rhetorical" relation of contrast between the content of the parenthetical and an element of the main line (there is *less* advertisement in Algeria than in Morocco **but** it is more **remarkable**, because it is written in Arabic).

Example (28) shows a more complex case of interaction between background and main line. The parenthetical contributes not only to the syntax of the whole pattern but also to its coherence. There is no means in the reduced version to reach a coherent interpretation. In the full version it is clear that S1 wants to say that, for the Mexicans, French people were perhaps not heroes, but at least much more popular than Americans. In the reduced version it is impossible to obtain this interpretation, as the only possible coreference for the pronoun *ils* is with *les français*, (the preposition *vis à vis* blocks the coreference with *des américains*). So we get the wrong interpretation that in comparison with Americans, the French were not very popular. What allows the correct interpretation in the full version is that *ils* can be coreferent with *les américains* introduced in rhematic position by the CFPC.

- (28) S1    mais là vraiment les français pour les mexicains c'était  
       S2    hum des héros  
       S1    non peut-être pas jusque là mais bon / vis à vis des américains  
             *parce qu'on avait les américains aussi* ben ils ont pas ramassé  
             un tel succès  
             ‘but then frankly the French for the Mexicans they were...  
             well heroes ... non I wont go so far but well compared to the  
             Americans –‘cos we had Americans also – well they didn’t get  
             so much popularity  
       ? S1    mais là vraiment les français pour les mexicains c'était  
             S2    hum des héros  
             S1    non peut-être pas jusque là mais bon / vis à vis des  
                     américains ben ils ont pas ramassé un tel succès

#### 4) The status of CFPC in the CG framework

Our description leads to the following conclusions :

- a. CFPC is a construction in the broad sense, that is a conventional association of form and meaning.
- b. It appears to be licensed by a communicative pattern : foreground – background as a whole. As it is impossible to predict the grammatical or even linguistic composition of the foreground, which can be any kind of communicative behavior, we are led to the conclusion that CFPC is pragmatically licensed by the communicative pattern, as a device allowing

the speaker to focus on the contextual pieces of information he thinks the addressee needs to get the more relevant interpretation of what is being communicated.

This leads us to address two questions : what is the exact nature of such a discourse pattern and what kind of inheritance network is it involved in ?

The basic components of the form of such patterns are not limited to linguistic elements : categories or constructions, but extend to “communicative behaviors” recognized as such by the participants in the interaction (Berrendonner, 2004). These behaviors may be performed through utterances or significant attitudes. The utterances may be based on grammatical constructions or merely on paralinguistic forms (interjections, discourse particles, onomatopoeia). The constructions that put these forms in relation can be analyzed as functionally distinct groupings of communicative or discourse units. The kind of grouping we have analyzed in this paper can be labeled as a [discourse – background] pattern, or even more generally [communicative behavior – background]. What should be pointed out is that grammatical devices are used to specify the relationship between the background and the main line of discourse. These grammatical devices such as the conjunction *parce que* are therefore multifunctional : on the one hand, they can be involved in specifying grammatical relations in constructions headed by a grammatical category. For instance, *parce que* specifies a grammatical relation verb-adjunct as a cause-consequence one. On the other hand, they specify, with the same conventionalized meaning, the relation between two communicative behaviors in an interaction. As we have seen, *parce que* instructs the addressee to use the information conveyed by the communicative unit it introduces as a “path” through which the meaning of the “nucleus” communicative behavior is to be reached.

Such a situation can be generalized to many grammatical morphemes. Insights in this direction can be found in the literature. CFPC recalls of the discourse patterns pointed out by M. Mithun (2005) rejoining observations by other linguists (Goethals, 2002, Miller 1998, Deulofeu 1999, Debaisieux, 2004, Debaisieux & Deulofeu, 2004, Hopper 1988, Iwasaki & Ono, 2002, Ono & Thompson, 1995) :

“In a number of languages the prosodic, morphological, and semantic cues that might characterize the sentence do not always converge. Dependent clause markers appear pervasively in what seem, on prosodic and semantic grounds, to be independent sentences. A closer look shows that these markers are being used to signal pragmatic dependency among larger elements in discourse. The markers of dependency serve several recurring functions in discourse. The Yup’ik Participial and Barbareno nominalized sentences contribute background, descriptive, subsidiary, explanatory, or evaluative information, information that does not move narrative forward. The Yup’ik Subordinative and the Hualapai switch-reference markers signal textual cohesion, marking statements that together compose a larger discourse unit.” (Mithun, 2005)

The common observation is that grammatical units can be involved in patterns that go beyond the scope of sentence grammar. But the case of CFPC helps us to generalize Mithun’s conclusions : not only discourse but interaction patterns are involved in CFPC. Our conclusion will be that these constructs support the broad conception of construction currently assumed that any kind of pairing between form and meaning should be considered as a construction, even if the form reduces to a prosodic pattern and the meaning to a broad pragmatic function (Croft, 2001). Our claim is that this comprehensive view of construction must even be extended to non verbal communicative behaviors if we want to encompass all the possible forms of CFPC.

One strong result that emerges from these conclusions is that grammatical signs like conjunctions are not only used to establish relationships between other signs but between signs and indexical aspects of human communication : gestures, inferences that are drawn from indexes. The challenge will be to find an adequate formalism to integrate the grammar of indexes into the grammar of signs.

As for the inheritance networks, CFPC inherits its formal properties from two more general patterns. First, as it responds negatively to all diagnostic tests which could be used to show its syntactic integration within the main clause, it must be analysed as an instance of “supplementive clause construction” and not as an instance of Head-Adjunct one. Second, it also inherits properties from a more general Bare Parenthesis Construction (BPC), exemplified in the italics part of the following utterance:

- (29) et après tu ouvres les feuillets comme un livre et avec la lumière du soleil *il faut absolument qu'il y ait le soleil* + il y a une ombre portée de la colonne vertébrale qui te dit que là il y a un poisson ou autre chose  
 'And after you open the layers like book pages and with (the help of) the sun light –it is absolutely necessary that there be sun – there appears the cast shadow of a spinal column, which tells you that there is a (fossil) fish or something.'

CFPC seems to fulfill the same metacommunicative function as the BPC parenthetical pattern in (29). Indeed a *parce que* could very well be inserted in (29). The main difference is that what is achieved by means of the iconic device of mere insertion of an independent utterance in another as in (29) is achieved in CFPC through a conventionalized meaning of the morpheme *parce que* related to its canonical use as a causal subordinator. As a consequence, the presence of *parce que*, as we have seen above, narrows the scope of pragmatic functions that the BPC can fulfill.

The question remains whether CFTP could be put together with the large class of parentheticals including epistemic parentheticals (Thompson & Mulac, 1991) or apparent dependant clause constructions which acquire interpersonal meaning (Traugott, 1989). This important question goes beyond the scope of our paper but we want to point out differences supporting the analysis of parentheticals and parenthesis like constructions (CFPC and BPC) as distinct structures. As mentioned above, on formal grounds, parentheticals are clearly related to a specific clause in which they are inserted at a constituent boundary (Marandin, 1999). CFPC and BPC are inserted more freely inside an utterance but cannot appear in front of it. On semantic grounds, parentheticals elaborate the content of the proposition conveyed by the utterance, modifying its epistemic status or adding subjective values to it. On the contrary CFTP is totally external to this content. The CFPC of example (15) is a good case on point. It doesn't modify in any way the semantics of the utterance it is inserted in but contributes to providing the common ground with which the addressee can elaborate an appropriate contextual interpretation of it and specially of the word *travailler*: it helps anticipate a request of clarification from the addressee about the exact role of the paleontologist "assistants" (*des gens qui travaillaient pour les paléontologues*). The distinction between parentheticals

and parenthesis insertions, of which CFPC is an instance, seems descriptively justified, even if the line between the discourse and metadiscourse levels is not always easy to draw.

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